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SIPDIS

STATE PASS OES/IHB AMB. LOFTIS, HHS FOR MARK ABDON, BANGKOK
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PINR, TF, TW

SUBJECT: TFFLUO1; MAY 6 TAIWAN H1N1 VIRUS UPDATE

REF: TAIPEI 515

¶1. Summary. Taiwan remains free from the H1N1 virus, although authorities are still vigilant in screening international arrivals, and in preparing for any possible outbreak. Taiwan's Center for Disease Control (TCDC) has requested the US CDC provide a sample of the H1N1 virus. End Summary.

¶2. According to the TCDC, which holds a formal press briefing daily on the status of H1N1 activities, as of noon May 6, Taiwan had no confirmed cases of the H1N1 virus. 84 suspected cases had been checked to date, with 71 testing negative for the H1N1 virus. 13 cases are pending test results. Many, if not all, of these pending cases are travelers with fevers arriving at ports of entry.

¶3. All travelers arriving from overseas destinations including mainland China pass through thermal screening. Flights arriving from areas known to have H1N1 virus are boarded by health screeners to evaluate passengers. Passengers identified with fever are then sent to a designated hospital nearby where they are tested for the H1N1 virus. According to the TCDC, the test takes about six hours, and if the traveler tests negative he is released. On May 5, a family of two American citizen children and green-card mother were detected to have fevers when they arrived at Taoyuan International Airport from Seattle transiting to Vietnam. Per established protocol, they were taken to a nearby hospital where they were tested for H1N1. When the test came back negative they were released and allowed to continue their journey.

¶4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has advised Taiwan travelers that Mexico remains on "red alert," its highest level of travel warning, while the U.S., Canada, Hong Kong, Korea among 17 countries are in yellow status, the lowest level of alert.

¶5. On May 5, Taiwan health authorities announced that they have earmarked NT\$20 billion (US \$606 million) for H1N1 control efforts. This week the authorities are distributing 2.2 million masks with the TCDC logo to be sold at convenience stores throughout the island to ease the public's concern over a shortage of the masks. Today the TCDC announced that it plans to purchase additional doses of Tamiflu and flu-prevention drugs to cover 30 percent of Taiwan's population (about 7 million people). Current stocks cover 10 percent of the population.

¶6. Health Minister Yeh Ching-Chuan has stated publicly that

Taiwan has requested CDC Atlanta provide an H1N1 virus sample. Taiwan CDC has told AIT that they are already working with a contact at HHS and expect to receive a sample of the virus in the next few days. Taiwan CDC hopes to develop and produce a vaccine for H1N1 within the three months.

¶7. The TCDC also told AIT that its staff, along with Taiwan based company ADImmune Corp, the Taiwan Bio Industry Organization, and Taiwan,s National Institute of Health participated in a teleconference organized by the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (IRPMA) under the auspices of WHO to discuss vaccine preparation and production issues. This teleconference will be held weekly. TCDC sources told us that since March 27 TCDC has had access to the IHR website and obtain virus information updates. This has helped them coordinate their antiviral planning.

YOUNG